

**Abstract 455**

**TITLE:** A Needs Assessment Study of Asian and Pacific Island Gay and Bisexual Men in Hawaii

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**BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVES:** While the overall rate of HIV infection among gay and bisexual men in Hawaii has declined over the years, it has steadily risen among Asian and Pacific Island men who have sex with men. The purpose of this exploratory study was to analyze the relationship between minority racial/ethnic and sexual identity, and HIV risk among Asian and Pacific Island men who have sex with men

**METHODS:** Qualitative, in-depth interviews were conducted with self-identified gay and bisexual men who resided on four islands in the state Hawaii. Respondents were recruited by key informant and snowball sampling methods to participate in semi-structured interviews that covered race/ethnicity, sexuality, HIV risk, and feedback about HIV prevention programs in Hawaii.

**RESULTS:** Twenty-four self-identified gay and bisexual men were interviewed in Hawaii during a 4-month period in 1998. The majority of participants were of Asian or Pacific Island descent and were lifetime residents of Hawaii. For many gay and bisexual men who are also API, greater social and cultural value is placed upon family loyalty and community affiliation than individual identity development/enactment. Other findings related to this culturally based, private-public tension include idealization of intimate relationships such that HIV risk reduction is abandoned; the employment of intentional and oftentimes faulty cost-benefit analyses that result in unsafe sex; and fatalistic beliefs about contracting HIV based on being male and gay.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The primary goal of the study was to assist Hawaii's HIV prevention planning group in designing programs to reach API gay and bisexual men, a traditionally under-represented population in HIV/AIDS services. Recommendations include increasing recruitment of role models who are API gay and bisexual men, born and raised in the Islands, to provide outreach and education; employment of more ecological, culturally sensitive HIV risk-reduction approaches that integrate sexuality, race/ethnicity, and "local" values and traditions; development or replication of HIV risk-reduction models that mediate the social stigma and geographic barriers for API men; and increased collaboration between "mainstream" API cultural groups and HIV/AIDS service organizations.

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